

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A vacuum pump comprising:
 - a pumping mechanism;
 - a drive shaft for driving the pumping mechanism;
 - a gear box connected to the drive shaft for rotating the drive shaft; andpressure control means defining a path to allow fluid to flow from a swept volume of the pumping mechanism to the gear box or vice versa to reduce the pressure difference therebetween, wherein a part of the path is defined by a first conduit extending between the pumping mechanism and the gear box and being separate from and other than a fluid passage along the drive shaft, and, located in said path, a reservoir for collecting oil passing via ~~[[a]]~~ the fluid passage along the drive shaft from the gear box towards the pumping mechanism so that, in use, pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box urges oil collected in the reservoir towards the gear box via a second conduit separate from and other than the fluid passage along the drive shaft.

2. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 1 wherein the pressure control means comprises a restriction cooperating with the rotating shaft.

3. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 2 wherein the restriction defines a chamber located along the length of the shaft.
4. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 2 wherein the restriction defines a first chamber proximate the pumping mechanism and a second chamber proximate the gear box.
5. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 3 wherein the pressure control means define a second path to allow fluid to flow from the gear box to the pumping mechanism to reduce the pressure difference therebetween.
6. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 5 wherein the second path is defined in part by a bore within the drive shaft.
7. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 6 wherein the bore has a fluid inlet proximate the gear box and a fluid outlet proximate said chamber.
8. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 1 wherein a non-return valve is located in the path and between the oil reservoir and the gear box, the valve being arranged to be opened by pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box.

9. (Currently Amended) The vacuum pump according to claim 1 wherein ~~a part of the path is defined by a conduit extending between the pumping mechanism and the gear box and comprising~~ the first conduit is provided with a filter for removing particulates from the fluid passing therethrough.

10. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 1 wherein the pressure control means define a second path to allow fluid to flow from the gear box to the pumping mechanism to reduce the pressure difference therebetween.

11. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 2 wherein the pressure control means define a second path to allow fluid to flow from the gear box to the pumping mechanism to reduce the pressure difference therebetween.

12. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 4 wherein the pressure control means define a second path to allow fluid to flow from the gear box to the pumping mechanism to reduce the pressure difference therebetween.

13. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 7 wherein a non-return valve is located in the path and between the oil reservoir and the gear box, the valve being arranged to be opened by pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box.

14. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 6 wherein a non-return valve is located in the path and between the oil reservoir and the gear box, the valve being arranged to be opened by pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box.

15. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 5 wherein a non-return valve is located in the path and between the oil reservoir and the gear box, the valve being arranged to be opened by pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box.

16. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 4 wherein a non-return valve is located in the path and between the oil reservoir and the gear box, the valve being arranged to be opened by pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box.

17. (Previously Presented) The vacuum pump according to claim 2 wherein a non-return valve is located in the path and between the oil reservoir and the gear box, the valve being arranged to be opened by pressurised fluid flowing from the pumping mechanism towards the gear box.

18. (Currently Amended) The vacuum pump according to claim 5 wherein ~~a part of at least one of the path and the second path is defined by a conduit extending between the pumping mechanism and the gear box and comprising~~ at least one of the first conduit and

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second conduit is provided with a filter for removing particulates from the fluid passing
therethrough.